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ABSTRACT

This report outlines the work and results of an Educational Assessment Task Force at Mount Hood Community College (Oregon) that was charged with improving institutional planning, strengthening programs and services, and meeting external accountability demands. The task force addressed both institutional effectiveness (the annual assessment of progress in achieving institutional goals using a series of key indicators) and educational assessment (a similar process but with a focus on instructional programs, disciplines and course offerings). To assess institutional effectiveness, the task force adopted Nichols' Five-Column Model, which addresses: (1) institutional goals; (2) intended educational outcomes; (3) means of program assessment and criteria for success; (4) summary of data collected; and (5) use of results. To implement the Educational Assessment Design, the task force utilized a peer-led model with faculty from well-assessed programs mentoring other faculty through a pilot process. The assessment timeline is presented along with a description of the roles and responsibilities of the assessment oversight team. Appended are: key assessment indicators for each institutional goal; data table examples; and "Mt. Hood Community College Educational Assessment Pilot Test Findings and Recommendations (prepared for Mt. Hood Community College's R. Dan Walleri by RMC Research Corporation's Gwen Hyatt, June 2001). (RC)

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Research & Planning

MHCC

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Final Report

EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE
Vern Porter, Industrial Division, Co-Chair
Dan Walleri, Research & Planning, Co-Chair

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September 2001

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Final Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) refers to the annual assessment of progress in achieving institutional goals. The assessment is conducted using a series of indicators that measure specific aspects of the college goals. Educational Assessment (EA) is a similar process but with a focus on instructional programs, disciplines and course offerings, typically college units (Nursing, History, Continuing Education, etc.). IE and EA should be logically connected. For example, under the college goal, Knowledge-Based Workforce, one of several indicators is graduation/completion. At the level of IE, one would review the overall graduation rate for all students. At the EA level, one would be examining the graduation rate for specific programs, such as Nursing. All IE indicators should be relevant to all or a subset of units, such as professional technical programs or transfer disciplines. Not all EA indicators need to relate back to IE indicators. For example, licensing examination results only apply to selected programs, such as Nursing. Finally, IE and EA indicators should have standards or benchmarks against which institutional and unit effectiveness can be determined. An example is the longstanding statewide standard of 70% job placement rate for graduates of professional technical programs.

This report describes the work and results of the Educational Assessment Task Force. Initiated in the spring of 1999 by Vice President of Instructional Services and Community Development, Mike Durrer, the Task Force has accomplished the following through spring 2001.

- Reviewed regional accreditation standards
- Crafted a statement of purpose
- Designed a system for assessing IE and instructional units
- Prepared initial college report on IE (fall 1999, subsequently updated annually)
- Initiated pilot EA efforts
- Developed schedule for EA of all instructional units
- Evaluated and refined EA
- Establishment of permanent committee to oversee IE and EA at MHCC – the Educational Assessment Oversight Group, including community representation

By the end of the 2001-2002 year, the IE and EA system for MHCC should be fully implemented. If successful, this effort should assist in improving institutional planning and performance, strengthen programs and services, and meet external accountability demands, such as regional accreditation.

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INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT
Final Report

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Educational Assessment Task Force Members 2000-2001

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Educational Assessment ...

Statement of Purpose

As an educational institution, MHCC "has an obligation to plan its courses of instruction to respond to student needs, to evaluate the effectiveness of that educational program in terms of the change it brings about in students, and to make improvements in the program dictated by the evaluative process" (Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, *Accreditation Handbook*, 1999 Edition, pp. 36-37). The purpose of MHCC's educational assessment effort is to:

- Facilitate student success
- Ensure that students are receiving effective instruction and achieving the standards set by programs, disciplines and course offerings
- Improve programs, disciplines and course offerings including assessment of needs related to staff, curriculum, equipment, facilities and other resources
- Provide the administration, board and other appropriate bodies with assessment findings to be used in decisions about the initiation, continuation, enhancement and/or elimination of programs, disciplines and course offerings
- Respond to external accountability demands, including accreditation

The educational assessment process at MHCC will be characterized as:

- Collaborative (with participation and support from the board, administration, faculty, support staff, students and community)
- Ongoing (a dynamic process that is expected to evolve over time – continuous improvement)
- Impartial
- Efficient
- Data driven
- Meaningful (in that the integrity of the process will be preserved and honored)
- Accountable (those involved will hold each other accountable for following the process, making decisions and following through)
- Communicated (assessment results will be shared before any decisions, and outcomes will be communicated to stakeholders)

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I. Introduction and Background

Increasing demands for accountability has been one of the defining characteristics of postsecondary education in the 1990s. Whether at the federal level (Student Right-to-Know Act), state level (Oregon State Board of Education "Performance Measures" for the community colleges), or locally (planning and budgeting, accreditation), assessing institutional effectiveness and educational offerings is an ongoing challenge. MHCC's accreditation review, conducted in fall 1997, highlighted accountability through two general recommendations to "assess institutional effectiveness based on a new or refined list of Indicators of Effectiveness and periodically make the results public, and to "eliminate inconsistencies and unevenness in educational program assessments." Educational assessment is also an important component of developing the institutional master plan, *MHCC 2010*, in terms of anticipating future curriculum and service needs for the community. **However, the primary motivation behind the involvement of Task Force members is to enhance opportunities for student success and provide a basis for continuous improvement of programs and course offerings.**

The Educational Assessment Task Force, co-chaired by Vern Porter, Instructor in Welding, and Dan Walleri, Director of Research and Planning, has developed:

- Indicators of institutional effectiveness;
- Institutional effectiveness report (fall 1999, subsequently updated annually);
- Content and format for program/discipline assessment reports;
- Content and format for program improvement plans; and
- Has guided implementation of pilot program/discipline assessments.

For additional information see Institutional Effectiveness and Educational Assessment Design Document (fall 1999), Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Report (fall 1999 and fall 2000), and Institutional Effectiveness and Educational Assessment Data Notebook (January 2000). The ongoing work of the Task Force is described in progress reports published in June 2000 and December 2000. Completing its work, the Task Force disbanded in June 2001. An Educational Assessment Oversight Group (OG), including community representation, has been established to monitor and evaluate assessment efforts on an ongoing basis. The OG began meeting in April 2001.

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) refers to the annual assessment of progress in achieving institutional goals. The assessment is conducted using a series of indicators that measure specific aspects of the college goals. Educational Assessment (EA) is a similar process but with a focus on instructional programs, disciplines and course offerings, typically college units (Nursing, History, Continuing Education, etc.). IE and EA should be logically connected. For example, under the college goal, Knowledge-Based Workforce, one of several indicators is graduation/completion. At the level of IE, one would review the overall graduation rate for all students. At the EA level, one would be examining the graduation rate for specific programs, such as Nursing. All IE indicators should be relevant to all or a subset of units, such as professional technical programs or transfer disciplines. Not all EA indicators need to relate back to IE indicators. For example, licensing

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examination results are only applicable to selected programs. Finally, IE and EA indicators may have standards or benchmarks against which institutional and unit effectiveness can be determined. An example is the longstanding statewide standard of 70% job placement rate for graduates of professional technical programs.

II. Institutional Effectiveness and Educational Assessment Design

The college IE and EA effort is built around the current five college goals.

Goal #1. **Knowledge-Based Workforce**. Provide knowledge-based educational offerings to meet student and community needs, with a complementary set of student and community support services.

Action Strategies

1.1 Strengthen instructional program with aim of achieving highest standards in preparation and outcomes.
1.2 Develop an outcomes-based integrated General Education program to compliment discipline specific preparation.
1.3 Develop exemplary instructional improvement and evaluation systems (faculty evaluation and educational outcomes assessment).
1.4 Design and implement activities to enhance the recruitment, hiring, orientation and mentorship of all college employees to support achievement of a knowledge-based learning community.
1.5 Strengthen business and industry partnerships with focus on the education and training needs of incumbent workers.

Goal #2. **Access & Diversity**. Provide affordable and attractive option for members of the community seeking a post-secondary education and/or careers, including the creation of an environment in which diversity thrives.

Action Strategies

2.1 Increase annual FTE by 3%.
2.2 Increase access throughout the district through the development of partnership-based community centers.
2.3 Strengthen student recruitment efforts.
2.4 Increase the number of local high school graduates attending MHCC.
2.5 Strengthen developmental education preparation such that the achievement of under-prepared students will equal that of entering students not needing remediation.
2.6 Conduct targeted outreach efforts and create an environment that provides support for an increasingly diverse student population to be successful.
2.7 Increase the participation rate of local high school students in dual credit programs.
2.8 Enhance employee sensitivity and appreciation of diversity.
2.9 Improve employee recruitment to achieve a college workforce reflecting the diversity of the community.
2.10 Develop Distance Education program to provide learning independent of time and place.

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2.11 Develop and implement and interactive college Web site such that students can obtain comparable services via Web that they could in-person.

Goal #3. **Requirements of Economic Development**. Develop programs in emerging technologies with emphasis on information, engineering, bio-medical and biological technologies.

Action Strategies

3.1 Design programming in high priority areas -- information, engineering, bio-medical and biological technologies.
3.2 Strengthen partnerships with local governments, workforce development agencies, and higher education.
3.3 Strengthen programs to prepare a skilled workforce to support economic development in the region.
3.4 Act as a catalyst to stimulate economic development.
3.5 Design and implement a job development program.

Goal #4. Transitions. Provide seamless transfer opportunities to colleges, universities and careers.

Action Strategies

4.1 Strengthen university articulation and increase the number of MHCC students transferring to four-year colleges and universities.
4.2 Strengthen career services and increase the job placement rate for MHCC graduates.
4.3 Increase number of GED, ESL and other outreach program completers who successfully transition to college-level programs.
4.4 Plan, design and build partnerships for establishment of a University Center at MHCC, allowing students and local residents the opportunity to earn a four-year degree.

Goal #5. Student Success. Provide infrastructure and support services to ensure student success.

Action Strategies

5.1 Increase overall student retention rate by 3%.
5.2 While preserving existing assets and facilities, plan and propose strategies for facilities expansion to meet the increasing demands of a community undergoing significant growth and cultural transformation.
5.3 Provide sufficient state-of-the-art technology and equipment to support knowledge-based education (Information Technology Strategic Plan).
5.4 Develop a comprehensive resource development program to ensure that financial requirements are secured.
5.5 Enhance/increase student financial aid.
5.6 Enhance childcare services for students.
5.7 Enhance instructional support services (tutoring, mentorships, etc.).

To assess IE, the Task Force created a "matrix of college goals and indicators of institutional effectiveness." For each college goal, a series of indicators were established. For example, under the college goal, Knowledge-Based Workforce, indicators include graduation rate, jobs available

related to skill training, living wage, etc. For each indicator, a description and standard are provided both at the institutional and unit level. For example, the standard for job placement is 70% both for the institution and all relevant programs. In other cases, the standard is relative, based on comparison to other colleges or other units within MHCC.

The Task Force created a similar matrix to guide unit assessments. In addition to the IE information, this matrix describes to which programs an indicator applies (professional technical, transfer, service or all), description of indicators and measures, standards, and commentary. Some of the measurement data for indicators is supplied centrally from Research & Planning, while other measures are unique to the unit and derived from various sources. See **Appendix A** for complete listing of goals and indicators.

Further information and details can be found in the IE Report (fall 1999 and fall 2000) and IE & EA Data Notebook (January 2000). Both are available from Research & Planning and are also on the web at **http://www.mhcc.cc.or.us/ci/allabout/research/main.htm**.

III. Educational Assessment Pilot Teams

To implement the EA design, the Task Force decided to use a peer-led model with faculty from well-assessed programs mentoring other faculty. The Allied Health programs undergo rigorous assessment for professional accreditation. Teri Tong, from Dental Hygiene, and George Hicks, from Respiratory Care, were recruited as initial mentors and worked with Chris Bruya and Mary Girsh, Communications & Performing & Visual Arts, Bill Wright, Business Administration, Vern Porter, Welding, and Jack Schommer, Community TV. The deans and faculty members will then work with their peers as the EA design is implemented across all instructional areas.

The pilot teams have been working on articulating the goals and objectives of the particular program or discipline, defining appropriate indicators and measures, and identifying sources of assessment information.

Gwen Hyatt of RMC Research Corporation completed an evaluation of pilot assessment efforts in the spring of 2001 (see **Appendix C**).

IV. Educational Assessment Schedule

Orientation and training for all faculty and deans began with the fall 2000 in-service and subsequent small group sessions. Divisions and programs actively engaged in educational assessment during 2000-2001 are as follows.

- Allied Health – all programs
- Business and Computer Technology – Business Administration
- Developmental Education – Adult Basic Education/GED
- Industrial – Welding

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- Communications, Performing and Visual Arts – Visual Arts and Graphic Arts Technology
- The Center for Community and Workforce Development – Continuing Education

Remaining divisions and programs will be brought into the process during 2001-2002 beginning with additional training during the fall 2001 in-service. Educational assessment will subsequently be conducted on an annual basis.

V. Educational Assessment Process at the Program/Discipline Level

MHCC's EA design has two basic components. The first is a review of indicators that would be done at the program or discipline level and would cover enrollment, cost, retention, job placement and so on (see Table 1).

Table 1. Indicators Developed by the Assessment Taskforce

		Who?*	Meaning	Standard	Data Source
College Goal: Knowledge-Based Workforce					
	Graduation/Completion	PT	Percentage of first-time degree-program students earning degree or completing core	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Jobs available related to skill training	PT	Determined by state and national projections, skill society research, advisory committee, local newspaper job announcements	High (demand exceeds supply) or medium (balance in supply and demand)	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Living wage	PT	Determined by State of Oregon	$10/hour	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Marketing	All	Marketing of specific programs	Done as needed to maintain or enhance enrollment	Self-assessment
College Goal: Access and Diversity					
	Enrollment	All	Number of students enrolled in program or with declared major in discipline	Stable (less than 20% variance over 3-5 years) or growing (more than 20% increase)	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Cost/Revenue per FTE	All	Derived from expenditures and budget	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Unique to Portland area	PT	Determined by Instructional Council	Unique programs merit special consideration	Self-assessment

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		Who?*	Meaning	Standard	Data Source
College Goal: Transitions					
	Job placement of graduates	PT	Percentage employed or continuing their education in field of training	70%	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Job placement of nongraduate core course completers	PT	Percentage employed or continuing their education in field of training	60%	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Number of transfers	Trans/PT	Total number of transfers per year	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	By request from Research and Planning
	Transfer performance	Trans/PT	Percentage maintaining satisfactory academic standing	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	By request from Research and Planning
College Goal: Student Success					
	Course success	All	Percentage of students completed selected courses with C or better	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Sequential course success	Trans/ Other	Percentage of students completing identified sequential courses with C or better	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	By request from Research and Planning
	Student satisfaction—Course	All	Percentage of students expressing satisfaction	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Samples available from Research and Planning
	Student satisfaction—Exit	PT/Trans	Percentage of students expressing satisfaction	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Samples available from Research and Planning
	Student satisfaction—Follow up	PT/Trans	Percentage of students expressing satisfaction	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Assessment Data report f your discipline
	Student satisfaction—General ed assessment	Trans	Percentage of students expressing satisfaction	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Samples available from Research and Planning
	Faculty and program satisfaction with college support services	All	Satisfaction with support services, e.g., marketing, advising and counseling, business services)	Meet educational needs of the instructional area	Self-assessment
	Student, faculty, and program satisfaction with service received	Other	Instruction in services courses	Meets the specific needs of other programs and disciplines	Self-assessment
	Retention—Course	All	Percentage of students completing individual courses	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Assessment Data report f your discipline

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0		Who?*	Meaning	Standard	Data Source
	Retention—Program	PT	Percentage of first-time degree-program students retained over 2 years	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	Assessment Data report fo your discipline
	Retention—Sequential courses	Trans/ Other	Percentage of students completing selected course sequences	Relative to other programs (top, middle, or bottom third)	By request from Research and Planning
	Technology funding level	All	Supply and operating budgets	Adequate to meet the educational needs of the instructional area	Self-assessment
	Equipment objective	All	Instructional equipment	Adequate to meet the educational needs compared to industry standards	Self-assessment
	Facilities funding level	All	Facilities funding	Adequate to meet the educational needs of the instructional area	Self-assessment
	Maintenance schedule	All	Facilities maintenance	Adequate to meet the educational needs of the instructional area	Self-assessment
Supplemental Indicators (Program- or Discipline-Specific)					
	Transfer performance relative to native students	Trans	Percentage maintaining satisfactory academic standing	Relative to native students	By request from Research and Planning
	Licensure	PT	Pass rate on program licensure examinations	90% of students taking exams	Self-assessment
	Diversity	All	Enrollment rates for under-served populations	Set by discipline	Assessment Data report fo your discipline
	Full- to Part-time IFTE Ratio	All	Percent of class hours taught by full-time instructors	At least 60% full-time	Assessment Data report fo your discipline
	Matriculation from Preparatory (e.g., ABE, ESL) to Credit Courses	Other	Percent of preparatory students matriculating to credit courses	Set by discipline	By request from Research and Planning
	GED Success Rate	Other	Percent of students in GED preparation who obtain GED	Set by discipline	By request from Research and Planning

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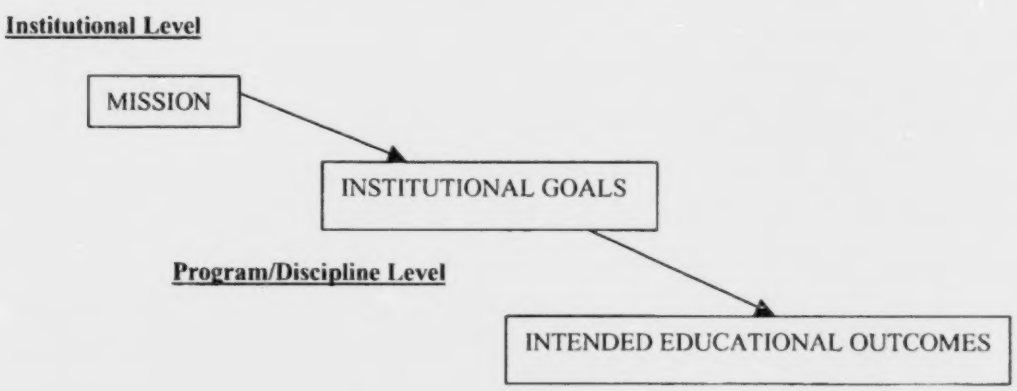
Thus, the first step is for the program faculty to review the information on these indicators for the program and determine if an improvement plan is needed. Most of the needed information is available centrally from Research & Planning, which has prepared a data table for each program and discipline. However, program faculty may want to supplement with information available from professional organizations and other sources. For example, if the job placement rate for a professional technical program were below 70%, the program faculty would develop a plan of improvement. This would include a review of labor market information to determine availability of jobs in the field (see **Appendix B** for sample data table and findings). The review could also include discussion with program advisory committee members and employers to determine if curriculum is meeting the needs of the labor market. In addition to this analysis, the improvement plan would include action strategies designed to improve performance (increase use of cooperative work experience, outreach to employers, etc.). Annual ongoing review would allow the program faculty to assess the improvement plan to ensure that objectives are being achieved.

This first component of EA is fairly straightforward with the indicators already tied back to institutional mission and goals as described in the IE and EA design document. In addition, program faculty will also need to define their intended educational outcomes specific to their program and assess those outcomes. This part of the EA process is what the pilot teams have been focused on. The process is often described as the "five-column model" from James O. Nichols', *A Practitioner's Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation* (Agathon Press, 3rd edition, 1995). This process is summarized in the following diagram.

Figure 1. Mission, Institutional Goals and Intended Educational Outcomes



The steps in the five-column model can be summarized as follows.

- Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose (mission statement and institutional goals – completed at institutional level)

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- Program Intended Educational Outcomes (defined at the program level, derived from expanded statement of institutional purpose)
- Means of Program Assessment and Criteria for Success
- Summary of Data Collected
- Use of Results

The table below illustrates use of the five-column model for different academic areas at MHCC (examples only – not based on actual assessments).

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Table 2. Five-Column Model of Assessment (NOT ACTUAL, FOR ILLUSTRATION ONLY)

Program	College Goal	Intended Outcomes	Means of Assessment/ Criteria	Summary of Findings	Use of Results
Dental Hygiene	Teaching & Learning	Students prepared for licensure/ employment	90% of students taking licensure exam pass	85% pass rate	Revise specific courses and standards related to areas of licensing exam that students have difficulty with
Dev Ed – Dev Writing	Teaching & Learning	Students prepared for college level writing courses	Successful Dev Ed students perform equal to students not having to take Dev Ed	60% of Dev Ed students successful in college writing compared to 75% of non-Dev Ed students	Revise and increase exit criteria from Dev Ed writing course
Business Adm	Teaching & Learning	Students prepared for four-year college work	Business Adm transfers perform equal to or better than other students in PSU Sch of Business	MHCC Business Adm transfer students perform and graduate at higher rate than other transfers or native PSU students	No improvement plan needed

Demonstrating and documenting use of results is critical for "closing the loop" and feeding assessment results into the college's planning process. It is also an increasing area of focus in regional accreditation review.

VI. Oversight Group Operational Guidelines

The "Oversight Group" (OG) will provide ongoing monitoring of the educational assessment process, results and actions. The OG will ensure that the criteria established in the *Statement of Purpose for Educational Assessment* are honored as follows.

- Facilitate student success

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- Ensure that students are receiving effective instruction and achieving the standards set by programs, disciplines and course offerings
- Improve programs, disciplines and course offerings including assessment of needs related to staff, curriculum, equipment, facilities and other resources
- Provide the administration, board and other appropriate bodies with assessment findings to be used in decisions about the initiation, continuation, enhancement and/or elimination of programs, disciplines and course offerings
- Respond to external accountability demands, including accreditation

The group will publish a formal report on an annual basis. The President and President's Council will utilize this report as input for improvement of programs, disciplines and course offerings, including meeting the needs related to staff, curriculum, equipment, facilities and other college related activities. Once reviewed by the President, the report will become part of the IE and EA presentation to the MHCCD Board. The OG will take special care in its monitoring and reporting role to ensure that the results of assessment and improvement plans receive appropriate administrative attention and follow up.

Oversight Group Membership

3 faculty (1 professional technical, 1 transfer, 1 Other, such as Developmental Ed.)
2 administrators (2 deans)
3 community members
2 Support Staff
1 ex-officio (Director, Research & Planning)

Research and Planning will provide the support service and the Research and Planning director will serve as ex-officio to the OG.

Terms of Office and Appointment

Faculty: 2 years. Initial members will be staggered one and two years to place a new faculty on the group each year. Appointed by the Faculty Senate.

Administrators: 2 years. Appointed by the College President.

Community Members: 2 years. Initial members will be staggered one and two years to place a new community member on the group each year. Appointed by the College President.

Support Staff: 2 years. Initial members will be staggered one and two years to place a new support staff member on the group each year. Appointed by the Classified Association.

Student Member: 1 or 2 years as desired by the member. Appointed by the OG.

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Members will serve no more that one term. The Chair for the group will be a faculty member. If vacancies occur, replacement shall be selected by a majority vote of the committee as a whole.

Criteria for Membership

1. Experience/Expertise in Assessment (Faculty and Deans)
   (Be able to attend national Ed Assessment Workshop)

2. Representation (Faculty/Deans/Support Staff)
   (A cross-section of professional-technical/transfer/other, Dev. Ed)

3. Knowledge/Experience with College and Community (Faculty/Deans/Community/Support Staff)

4. Time to do the Work (Faculty/Deans/Community/Support Staff)

5. Excuse self from voting if directly involved in a program's assessment (Faculty/Deans/Community/Support Staff)

Meeting Frequency

The OG will meet at least once each term of the regular academic year. Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed.

Mission

The "Oversight Group" has been formed for the purpose of monitoring and determining the effectiveness of the college in honoring the Statement of Purpose for Educational Assessment.

The OG charge:

- Review and evaluate college support related to the effectiveness of all course/program offerings
- Review all assessment action plans and recommendations
- Highlight and recommend ways to address reoccurring concerns documented in the assessment process
- Compile feedback from faculty and staff on assessment process and make recommendations for needed revisions
- Follow up on administrative actions in response to OG recommendations
- Prepare an annual report to the faculty, administration and MHCC Board

Prepare a formal assessment of the effectiveness of the OG every three years

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Oversight Group Initial Meeting

Current members of the OG are as follows.

Table 3. Educational Assessment Oversight Group 2001-2002

Community Members
Ron Craig, Fujitsu
Ed Hartin, City of Gresham
Patty Brost, Legacy Mount Hood Medical Center

Faculty
Vern Porter, Industrial Division (chair)
Rick Bolesta, Science Division
Mary Girsch, Communication, Performing and Visual Arts Division

Support Staff
Rebecca Kenney, The Center for Community and Economic Development
Garie Zordich, Language and Literature Division

Administration
Chris Bruya, Communication, Performing and Visual Arts Division
John Saito, Allied Health Division

Ex Officio
Dan Walleri, Research and Planning

The OG held its initial meeting on April 30, 2001 (see **Appendix D** for the minutes from this meeting). The members reviewed the assessment design, including the findings from an evaluation conducted by Gwen Hyatt of RMC Research Corporation. As a result of these discussions, further refinement of the design was made, with results incorporated into the overview of the educational assessment process as described in section VII.

VII. Overview of Educational Assessment Process

In addition to the design prepared by the Taskforce, the process described here also includes suggestions from Gwen Hyatt, outside evaluator from RMC Research, and from the Educational Assessment Oversight Group (OG). Both Hyatt and the OG recommended that the process be streamlined, especially with regard to the number of indicators that program faculty would be expected to respond to.

Key Indicators. Each program should choose from among the *supportive* and *customized* indicators (see below) the 3 to 6 *key* indicators that most significantly measure the success of the program. Key indicators are those that are critical to the viability of a program (i.e., enrollment)

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and will often be the same for groups of programs (professional technical, transfer, etc.). However, key indicators can be different for every assessment unit. For Continuing Education, one key indicator may be "Student Satisfaction—Course" because each individual continuing education course is taken by choice rather than by program design. For a transfer program, a key indicator may be success of MHCC students after they transfer compared to the success of other students at the transfer institutions.

Supportive Indicators. Using the list of indicators developed by the Assessment Taskforce as a starting point, each program should respond to any indicators on the list that are relevant and meaningful.

Customized Indicators. Each program should develop and respond to any other indicators it believes are good measures of its success.

As conceived by the Assessment Taskforce, the function of the institutional assessment effort is to create an opportunity for feedback between the programs and departments and the college administration. The creation of the Assessment Oversight Committee is an important part of this process as it serves its function to "provide ongoing monitoring of the educational assessment process, results, and actions." It is critical that there be a clear process in how the results and recommendations from the programs and departments will be transferred from the faculty and deans to the administration and how the administration will report back to the faculty. All recommendations resulting from this process that require resources or administrative approval need to follow a specific and consistent feedback loop as illustrated in figure 2.

1. The programs and disciplines make recommendations as part of the institutional assessment process.
2. The deans submit overall division summaries to the President's Council via the vice presidents and to the Director of Research and Planning who will work with the faculty chair to schedule review by the Assessment Oversight Committee. These division summaries report findings and recommendations from the programs and disciplines, and indicate which items need to be addressed in the next planning/budgeting cycle. Through the division summaries, the deans are responsible for bringing forward any resource requests identified in program and discipline assessments.
3. As part of its annual planning and budget development process, the President's Council responds in writing to the planning objectives and resource requests made by the deans as reported in the division summaries. The responses are sent to Assessment Oversight Committee and copied to the vice presidents, the deans, and the programs and disciplines.
4. The Assessment Oversight Committee reviews the patterns of resource allocation and denial with special emphasis on the common indicators identified by each program or department. The committee submits an annual report to both the President's Council and the MHCC District Board of Education.
5. Based on findings from annual review of assessment indicators, the Oversight Committee may initiate a comprehensive review of a program or discipline on its own initiative or at the request of the President's Council. A comprehensive review may take one of many

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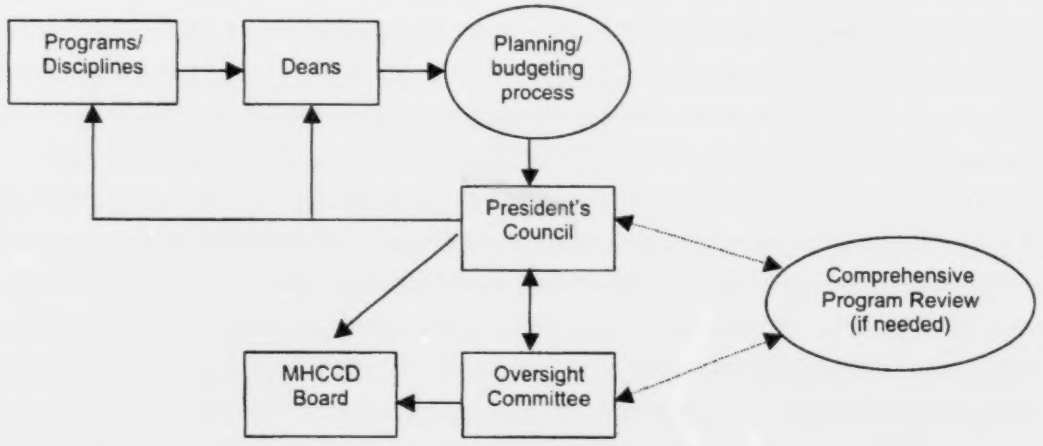
forms, such as additional data collection, paneling area employers, or DACUM. Results from a comprehensive review are forwarded to both the President's Council and the Oversight Committee, with the Oversight Committee submitting any recommendations to the President's Council. The President's Council will issue its findings, recommendations and decisions in writing to the Assessment Oversight Committee and send copies to the vice presidents, the deans, and the programs and disciplines. The Assessment Oversight Committee will include a summary of results and recommendations in its annual report to the MHCCD Board of Education.

Figure 2. The Assessment Reporting and Feedback Process



VIII. Relationship to Planning and Resource Allocation

Assessment, planning and budgeting are, or at least should be, ongoing processes. Time lines are only relevant because of legal, accountability and documentation requirements (for example, for accreditation). Thus, these various requirements require that snapshots be taken on a periodic basis. A complicating factor is that in the case of assessment you are looking back in time while for planning and budgeting you are looking ahead, at least one year and often two years. The following chart describes the time lines and relationship between assessment, planning and budgeting. The key time driver is the budget, which has to be adopted by the MHCCD Board of Education in June of each year for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Figure 3 provides an overview of the interrelated processes and time lines.

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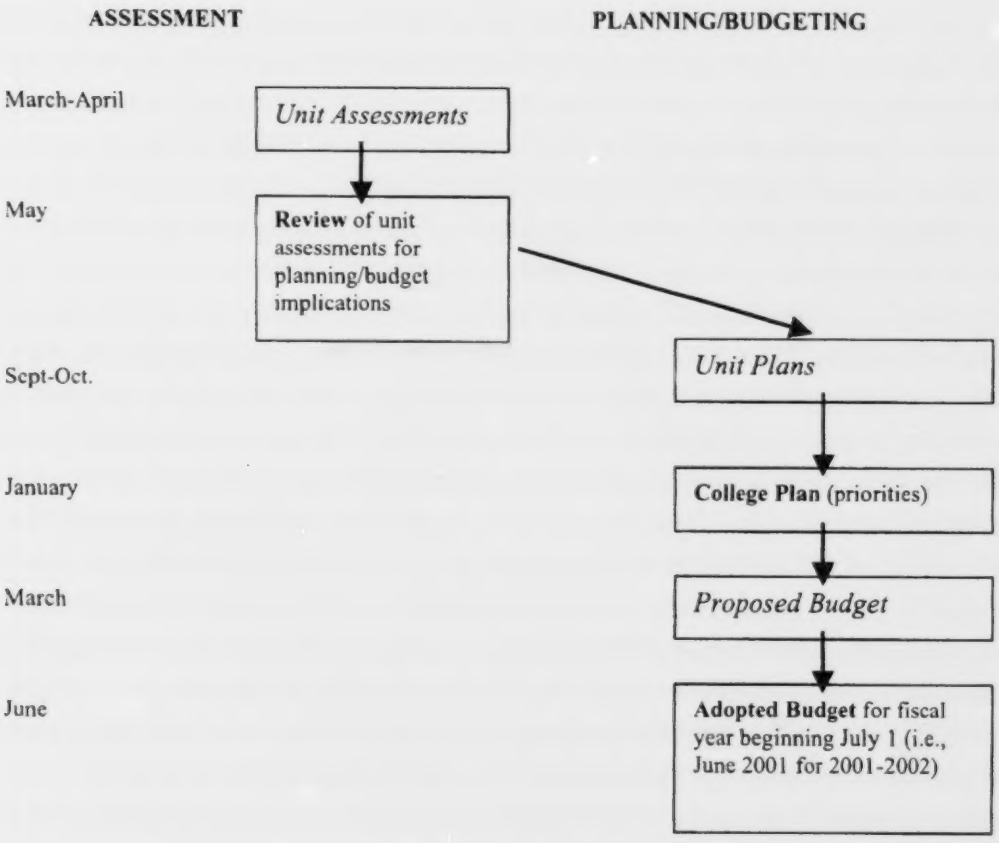
Research & Planning

Figure 3. Assessment, Planning and Budget Time Lines



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|ppendix A. Indicators Per Criteria (Goal)

Goal #1. Knowledge-Based Workforce. Provide knowledge-based educational offerings to meet student and community needs, with a complementary set of student and community support services.

Key Indicator

1.1 Graduation/Completion. Maintain level of graduates as a percentage of total annual FTE equal to or greater than that of comparable community colleges in the State of Oregon.
1.2 95% of MHCC graduates will pass licensure/certification examination results.
1.3 Living Wage. Minimum of $10 per hour or $400 per week. Weekly income of professional technical graduates employed after attending MHCC (1st quarter following graduation).
1.4 Achieve General Education outcomes (TBD).
1.5 Faculty Participation. 100% of faculty participate in at least one professional development activity per year.
1.6 Faculty Satisfaction. At least 70% of the faculty rate the performance of the TLC as excellent or very good.
1.7 Customer Satisfaction. 90% of employers/employees rate customized training services as excellent or very good.
1.8 Marketing. Expenditures and measures of effort relative to enrollment levels and growth. Benchmark to be determined.

Goal #2. Access and Diversity . Provide affordable and attractive option for members of the community seeking a post-secondary education, including the creation of an environment in which diversity thrives.

Key Indicator

2.1 Enrollment. Increase annual FTE by 3% for 2002-2003.
2.2 Community Satisfaction. From The Nelson Report (2001) Survey Research Report: "Mt. Hood Community College enjoys an excellent reputation in the community, garnering an extremely high positive rating of 67% (excellent – 20%, pretty good – 47%).
2.3 Increase market share of local high school graduates by 10%.
2.4 Performance of Guided Studies Students. Successful Guided Studies students will achieve retention and academic performance levels comparable to those of non-Guided Studies students.
2.5 Jump Start Enrollment. Increases by 5% in 2002-2003.
2.6 Employee Profile. Percentage of protected classes among MHCC employees approximates community profile.
2.7 Student Body Profile. Percentage of protected classes among MHCC students approximates community profile.
2.8 Performance. Students from protected classes will matriculate, maintain standards of academic progress and complete programs of study at similar rates to students in non-protected classes.
2.9 Cost/Revenue. Comparable to peer colleges.
2.10 Achieve interactive Web time lines (student registration, etc.).
2.11 Distance Education program development. Ten new courses developed each year.
2.12 Distance Education enrollment – increase by 1,000 by 2002-2003.

Goal #3. Requirements of Economic Development.
Develop programs with emphasis on information, engineering, bio-medical and biological technologies.

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Key Indicator

3.1 Meet Program development and enrollment targets (TBD).
3.2 Meet economic development and job creation targets (TBD).

Goal #4. Transitions. Provide seamless transfer opportunities to colleges, universities and careers.

Key Indicator

4.1 Job Placement (Graduates). 70% of professional technical graduates are employed or continuing their education in field of training.
4.2 Job Placement (Non-Graduate Core Class Completers, 60/30 core credits completed for associate degree/certificate). 60% of professional technical leavers are employed or continuing their education in field of training.
4.3 Number of Transfers. Maintain level of transfer majors attending Oregon University System institutions.
4.4 Transfer Performance. 90% of MHCC transfer students to OUS system maintain a minimum of 2.00 GPA.
4.5 70% of students completing GED, ESL and other outreach programs who desire to will successfully transition to college-credit programs.

Goal #5. Student Success. Provide infrastructure and support services to ensure student success.

Key Indicator

5.1 Retention. Increase overall retention rate by 3%.
5.2 Student Satisfaction. Maintain "excellent/good" overall level of satisfaction with the college in general.
5.3 Course Success. A minimum of 75% of students will receive a C grade or higher.
5.4 Student Satisfaction. Maintain "excellent/good" overall level of satisfaction with the college in general.
5.5 Increase Library base budget by 10% a year.
5.6 Implement Facilities Master Plan.
5.7 Facilities maintenance schedule is implemented according to specified time lines.
5.8 Facilities Management customer satisfaction -- TBD.
5.9 Fund Raising. 10% increase annually.
5.10 Capital Campaign. Targets achieved.
5.11 Technology Funding Level. Maintain budget target for technology funding (currently 2.25% of annual operating budget).
5.12 Computer User Satisfaction. Maintain "excellent/good" overall level of satisfaction.
5.13 Equipment Objective. Provide sufficient state of the art equipment (monitored by funding distribution across areas).
5.14 Campus Climate. Benchmark for campus climate established in survey conducted in spring 2000 with plans to repeat the survey each year. Indicator question: percentage agrees with statement that "MHCC is a supportive environment in which to work."
5.15 Increase number of students receiving financial aid (target TBD).
5.16 Increase number of childcare slots for students (target TBD).
5.17 Increase number of students receiving instructional support services (target TBD).

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Appendix B. Data Table Example

	Base Year	1994-1995	1995-1996	% Change	1996-1997	% Change	1997-1998	% Change	1998-1999	% Change	1999-2000	% Change
Criteria – Professional Technical Teaching & Learning												
Graduation/Completion												
Degrees	8	8	14	75.0%	2	-85.7%	2	0.0%	3	50.0%	7	133.3%
Certificates	NA	NA	NA		1		1	0.0%	NA		NA	
***Finding*: middle** (typical for this type of program – graduation is not a requirement for employment in the field)												
Job Placement-Grads												
Pre-Prog. Empl. Rate	57	57	NA		67		NA		NA		NA	
Post-Prog. Empl. Rate	71	71	NA		33		NA		NA		NA	
***Finding*: meets standard** (lack of recent data due to suspension of matching by Employment Division, but meets 70% standard in two of the three years)												
Job Placement-Non-Grad												
	NA	NA	NA		NA		NA		NA		NA	
***Finding*: NA**												
Jobs Available												
Multiple occupations – according to the Oregon Labor Market Information System, reasonable job opportunities exist for trained workers. 1998 Oregon employment for Printing Press Machine Operators is 1,575 with 3% growth projected through 2008. See OLMIS report attached for details.												
***Finding*: medium**												
Living Wage												
Pre-Program Weekly	57	57	NA		NA		NA		NA		NA	
Post-Program Weekly	305	305	NA		NA		NA		NA		NA	
Change	248	248	NA		NA		NA		NA		NA	
***Finding*: Yes, meets living wage standard of at least $10/hour.** Based on OLMIS, average hourly wage ranges from $13-16/hour.												

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	Base Year	1994-1995	1995-1996	% Change	1996-1997	% Change	1997-1998	% Change	1998-1999	% Change	1999-2000	% Change
Course Success											81%	
		(Division success rate is 87%)										
***Finding*: medium, typical compared to institutional average**												
Student Satisfaction												
Course	NA											
Exit	NA											
Follow Up	NA											
***Finding*: NA**												
Program Satisfaction with College Support Services	NA											
***Finding*: NA**												
Criteria – Professional Technical Enrollment												
Enrollment												
Student FTE		36	NA	36	26	-27.8%	19	-26.9%	24	26.3%	17	-29.2%
Headcount		206	NA	206	163	-20.9%	129	-20.9%	123	-4.7%	110	-10.6%
***Finding*: Decreasing**												
Cost/Revenue per FTE									-$4,367		-$7,546	
***Finding*: bottom third (well below college wide average of even in cost/revenue balance**												
Unique to Portland			Also offered at Portland Community College									
***Finding*: No**												
Retention Rate												
Course	NA	NA	NA		NA		NA		NA		98%	
Program	NA	NA	NA		20%		0%		NA		NA	
***Finding*: High on Course, Low on Program Retention**												

	Base Year	1994-1995	1995-1996	% Change	1996-1997	% Change	1997-1998	% Change	1998-1999	% Change	1999-2000	% Change
Marketing	NA	NA	NA		NA		NA		NA		NA	
***Finding*: NA**												
Criteria – Technology												
Technology Funding Level	NA											
***Finding*: NA**												
Equipment	NA											
***Finding*: NA**												
Criteria – Facilities												
Facilities Funding Level	NA											
Finding: NA												
Maintenance Schedule	NA											
Finding: NA												

Overall Findings

Major issues are enrollment and retention, which produce an unsustainable cost per FTE.

Recommendations

1. Administration and faculty need to review indicators with rating of NA, such as student satisfaction, evaluation of college support services, etc. Many of these are qualitative in nature and require judgment by those responsible for the program. Some of these indicators, such as student satisfaction, can be assessed by quantitative means and may require additional studies.
2. In light of enrollment decline, significant regional employers need to be involved in the assessment with regard to job opportunities, viability of curriculum and equipment, etc.

Mt. Hood Community College
Educational Assessment Pilot Test

Findings and Recommendations

Prepared for

Mt. Hood Community College
26000 SE Stark Street
Gresham, OR 97030

Prepared by

RMC Research Corporation
522 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 1407
Portland, OR 97204

June 2001

Mt. Hood Community College Educational Assessment Pilot Test

Findings and Recommendations

Prepared for

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June 2001

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Introduction

In spring 1999 an Educational Assessment Taskforce was formed to meet Mt. Hood Community College's (MHCC) need to address issues of institutional effectiveness. As explained in the MHCC Institutional Effectiveness and Educational Assessment Data Notebook:

> Increasing demand for accountability has been one of the defining characteristics of postsecondary education in the 1990s . . . MHCC's accreditation review, conducted in fall 1997, highlighted accountability through two general recommendations to "assess institutional effectiveness based on a new or refined list of Indicators of Effectiveness and periodically make the results public," and to "eliminate inconsistencies and unevenness in educational program assessments." Educational assessment is also an important component of developing the institutional master plan in terms of anticipating future curriculum and service needs for the community.

The taskforce, co-chaired by Vern Porter, Welding Instructor, and Dan Walleri, Director of Research and Planning, worked to develop and guide the implementation of a collegewide program-level assessment process. This implementation began with a pilot test of faculty in selected divisions, including Allied Health; Business and Computer Technology (BCT); Communication, Performing, and Visual Arts; Industrial Technology; Continuing Education; Adult Basic Education; and Evening and Weekend College.

The pilot test was carried out during the 2000–01 academic year. In April and May 2001, a consultant from RMC Research Corporation conducted interviews with 12 faculty members and deans representing transfer programs, professional/technical programs, and other programs that conducted the pilot test. The individuals interviewed are listed in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1
Pilot Test Participants Interviewed

Name	Department	Program Type
Ann Bonner	Mental Health/Human Services	Professional/Technical and Transfer
Chris Bruya	Art	Transfer
Brenda Button	ABE/GED	Other
Mary Girsch	Art	Transfer
Paula Gubrud	Nursing	Professional/Technical
Chris Heideman	Occupational Therapy Assistant	Professional/Technical
Amy Hoover	Aviation	Professional/Technical
Rebecca Kenney	Continuing Education	Other
Vern Porter	Welding	Professional/Technical
Jim Russell	Business Administration	Professional/Technical and Transfer
Teri Tong	Dental Hygiene	Professional/Technical
Valerie Ward	Evening/Weekend College	Other

This report outlines the consultant's findings from interviews with the pilot testers and consequent recommendations for implementing this assessment effort collegewide. The report is divided into findings about the process itself and findings about *Assessment Builder*, the software used during the pilot process to store and report the assessment information.

The Educational Assessment Process

The faculty and deans participating in the pilot test noted a variety of ways in which this institutional assessment process will be valuable for their programs and departments. For transfer and service programs that had not previously engaged in formal assessment activities, the process provided the opportunity to self-assess. Faculty from these programs found having to identify specific criteria and indicators on which they can be assessed helpful in thinking about ways to measure their past success and future improvement. They saw potential for gaining new information about their programs that could be used to guide future decision making and keep department members informed.

For programs with external accreditation requirements, the process provided a systematic method for tracking and storing program-related data needed for the accreditation process. In programs where the accreditation process has no prescribed structure, the institutional assessment process provided a framework for collecting and summarizing relevant information. Additionally, the pilot testers noted that any support provided as part of the institutional process will help them gain better access to this necessary information.

For all programs, the pilot testers noted that the institutional assessment process provided a formal avenue for delineating needs and highlighting successes. Participants appreciated the opportunity to candidly describe their programs' shortcomings and needs, to bring to the table arguments for increased resources, to defend their programs against potential cuts, and to use data to make strategic planning decisions. Because transfer programs are cross-disciplinary and accreditation of professional/technical programs may include evaluation of collegewide resources, several pilot testers also noted that this collegewide assessment effort fills an important role by addressing needs across all disciplines and areas.

Recommendations for Implementation

In a succinct question echoed by other participants, one pilot tester asked, "Do you want good data or do you just want me to fill in the blanks?" MHCC should seriously consider the effects of the implementation process on the quality and usefulness of the resulting data. If participating faculty and deans are to engage in this process meaningfully, it must be established in a way that is easy to implement and beneficial to the programs and disciplines as well as to the administration.

To achieve this benefit, the process should be customized to each assessment unit (program, discipline, department, or division); include substantial assistance and support for implementation; include ongoing support and coordination of the process through the Research and Planning department; and close the feedback loop by ensuring that the assessment information is used by the administration, which in turn keeps the faculty informed. The following recommendations for effective collegewide implementation of the process are based on the information and ideas provided by the pilot testers.

Recommendation 1: Customize the indicators and process to be used to each program

As part of the pilot process, the Assessment Task Force developed a list of standardized indicators associated with the college goals to be assessed by all departments and programs. With the understanding that different types of programs have different needs, slightly different indicators were chosen for professional/technical programs, transfer programs, and other programs (i.e., service departments such as Mathematics and nonacademic programs such as Continuing Education.) Exhibit 2 lists the indicators developed by the taskforce.

Exhibit 2
Indicators Developed by the Assessment Taskforce

College Goal: Teaching and Learning	Prof./Tech.	Transfer	Other
Graduation/Completion	X		
Job placement of graduates	X		
Job placement of nongraduate core course completers	X		
Jobs available related to skill training	X		
Living wage	X		
Number of transfers		X	
Transfer performance		X	
Course success	X	X	X
Sequential course success		X	X
Student satisfaction—Course	X	X	X
Student satisfaction—Exit	X	X	
Student satisfaction—Follow up	X	X	
Student satisfaction—General ed assessment		X	
Faculty and program satisfaction with college support services	X	X	X
Student, faculty, and program satisfaction with service received			X
College Goal: Enrollment			
Enrollment	X	X	X
Cost/Revenue per FTE	X	X	X
Unique to Portland area	X	X	X
Retention—Course	X	X	X
Retention—Program	X		
Retention—Sequential courses		X	X
Marketing	X	X	X
College Goal: Technology			
Technology funding level	X	X	X
Equipment objective	X	X	X
College Goal: Facilities			
Facilities funding level	X	X	X
Maintenance schedule	X	X	X

This list of indicators, however, did not prove to be sufficiently flexible. Virtually all pilot testers discovered that they could not meaningfully address some indicators listed for their program type. For instance, Dental Hygiene cannot assess "Retention—Course" because all students in the program take precisely the same courses and cannot drop courses without quitting the program. In Aviation, issues of job placement were hard to interpret because no student just finishing any college aviation program will have completed sufficient flight time to be directly hirable. The problem was far more acute for transfer programs whose student populations are not well defined, who rely on a variety of general education courses and courses from other departments, and whose facilities and equipment are often shared. (For instance, the BCT division shares facilities and technology between all departments.) And because "other" programs range from academic service departments like mathematics and English to noncredit services such as Adult Basic Education and Continuing Education, their needs are more diverse yet.

Most pilot testers also found indicators missing from the list that are of specific importance to their programs or that they already use to measure success. For instance, Adult Basic Education needed to address indicators related to GED success and matriculation to regular courses, and the music department measures success by the standing of its performance groups in various competitions.

Finally, some assessment units do not fall neatly into any of the three categories. Mental Health/Human Services, for instance, offers an AAS degree, but most of the program's students transfer to baccalaureate programs. BCT offers both transfer and professional/technical programs, which are difficult to assess separately because they share courses and resources. To address these profound differences between different programs and departments, the following course of action is recommended.

Common Indicators: From among the *supportive* and *customized* indicators outlined below, each program should choose the 3 to 6 *common* indicators that most significantly measure the success of the program. Common indicators are those that are critical to the viability of a program and will often be the same for similar types of programs; however, common indicators may be different for every assessment unit. For example, one common indicator for Continuing Education

may be "Student Satisfaction—Course" because each individual continuing education course is taken by choice rather than by program design. For a transfer program, a common indicator may be success of MHCC students after they transfer compared to the success of other students at the transfer institutions.

Supportive Indicators: Using the list of indicators developed by the Assessment Taskforce as a starting point, each program should respond to any indicators on the list that are relevant and meaningful.

Customized Indicators: Each program should develop and respond to any indicators in addition to the supportive indicators that it believes are good measures of its success.

Unquestionably, accreditation teams and the MHCC Assessment Oversight Committee need to see consistent use of assessment across programs; however, it is neither practical nor worthwhile for every program to respond to every indicator listed for that program type. The necessary constancy can be achieved through use of a standardized process and reporting vehicle and on-going review of the same common indicators.

Recommendation 2: Provide assistance and support for initial implementation

For many faculty the process—and perhaps even the concept—of assessing program outcomes will be new, and neither the departments nor the Research and Planning office have data collection instruments in place. For other faculty accustomed to external accreditation, efficiently integrating this assessment process with other required processes will be challenging. Faculty in all programs and departments will need to be supported through the process of determining what defines programmatic success in relation to the college goals and how to obtain, record, and interpret data to measure related outcomes.

Most of the interviewees indicated that during the pilot test they relied heavily on the use of a mentor, a Research and Planning staff person, or another person knowledgeable about the process and software. Most also indicated they would have liked more assistance. Some pilot testers needed help understanding the purpose and outcomes of the process, some needed help with the software itself, and most were confused about how to tie the process and the software together.

(Common questions included, "Where do I input this information? What goes where?") Many testers also wished for feedback about whether they had completed the process correctly.

Transfer and other non-professional/technical programs will need added help and support during the initial implementation of this process. Although most professional/technical programs already have standard assessment methods in place for specialized accreditation or Perkins grant evaluation reasons, transfer faculty and deans interviewed stressed that the process as piloted required them to "reinvent the wheel." Transfer and other programs will need to see models or examples of completed assessment reports, will need assistance developing or locating assessment instruments, and will need help translating the data into usable information. And unlike professional/technical programs, whose goals tend to be uncomplicated and easily measured (e.g., students graduate from the program and place into related jobs), transfer programs will need help determining how to measure progress toward their more complex and sophisticated goals (e.g., students develop a broader and deeper understanding of relevant concepts).

MHCC has already identified an outside consultant to serve as an ad hoc Assessment Coordinator during the first year of implementation of the process. This Assessment Coordinator should be instrumental in helping individual assessment units work through the process, from establishing measurable objectives to entering data into the software. The Assessment Coordinator will also serve as a liaison between the assessment units and the Research and Planning staff. Each assessment unit should also have a Unit Coordinator who will coordinate the effort for that unit and also serve as the liaison between the unit and the Assessment Coordinator. The following schedule for project implementation is recommended:

September 2001

During the fall inservice, all faculty and deans should be given an overview of the institutional assessment goals and the process to be used, be introduced to the Assessment Coordinator, and be given the opportunity to ask questions.

The pilot testers consistently and uniformly misunderstood the role of the Assessment Builder software, equating entering information into the software with the process of institutional assessment. Because conducting meaningful program-level evaluation will require the participants

to separate the software from the process, the software should not be introduced during the inservice. Training on the software can be provided to the specific individuals who will use it at the time of need.

Fall 2001 and Winter 2002

During fall and winter terms of the 2001–2002 academic year, the Assessment Coordinator should meet with the Unit Coordinator and some or all faculty in each unit. The division dean should also attend this meeting. In some cases, it may be possible for all the programs in one division to meet at the same time. During the meeting the Assessment Coordinator should work with the dean and faculty to do the following:

6. Discuss the purpose and background of this collegewide institutional assessment process and the specific role of program-level assessment.
7. Discuss departmental goals and determine how to define successful achievement of those goals.
8. Choose *selected* indicators and develop *additional* indicators as needed. Chose *common* indicators from among the list of indicators to be used. Create a written list of these indicators to serve as a starting point for data collection and reporting later in the year.
9. Determine what instruments or other means will be used to assess all indicators selected and discuss what information these indicators will provide. Determine how and when the data will be gathered and processed and what support is needed from Research and Planning.

Spring 2002

In spring 2002 the Assessment Coordinator will meet with again with the Unit Coordinators to guide them through the process of organizing the information gathered and inputting it into the assessment software. During this meeting the Assessment Coordinator will offer assistance and suggest ways to present the information.

Academic Year 2002–2003

Limited support from either the Assessment Coordinator or a Research and Planning staff member will need to continue into the second year of implementation. Programs that participated during

the pilot test will be completing the formal process for the first time, and new questions will certainly emerge from programs completing the process for the second time.

Recommendation 3: Provide institutional support for the Unit Coordinators

The pilot testers repeatedly stressed that initial implementation of this process required a large time commitment. In single person departments, the full responsibility for completing the assessment fell on that one person. In larger departments, one person needed to solicit information and opinions and coordinate the efforts of various faculty members with conflicting priorities. (In the pilot test, limited time forced most participants in larger departments to simply complete the process alone.)

As suggested in Recommendation 2, each assessment unit should have a Unit Coordinator. The administration should recognize and support the time required by this coordinator if the process is to produce meaningful, considered results. For the first year of implementation for each unit, Unit Coordinators should be compensated, monetarily or through release time, for the extra time required.

A possible alternative would be to involve the department secretaries, other support staff, or a Research and Planning department staff member heavily in the process. These support persons would be responsible for gathering and compiling the information and entering it into the computer. This approach would lighten the workload of the Unit Coordinator, freeing up the coordinator's time for interpreting the information and making recommendations.

Recommendation 4: Provide ongoing support and coordination of the process through the Research and Planning department

In addition to early hands-on support from the Assessment Coordinator, programs will need ongoing structured support from the Research and Planning department. Central to ability of the programs and departments to complete effective programmatic assessments is the need for current, accurate, and usable data. The role of Research and Planning should be to centralize data collection efforts, to process available data, and to be proactive in providing data to the programs. The role of the faculty and deans should simply be to assemble the data and determine what it means for their students and programs. To this end, the Research and Planning staff should put systems in place to carry out the following:

10. Work directly with the deans of programs with unrestricted student entry to establish a meaningful method for determining which students are enrolled. Subsequently, all data related to enrollment and retention should be based on these definitions. All pilot testers from transfer and other unrestricted entry programs expressed frustration with their inability to answer questions about enrollment and retention.
11. Provide timely, accurate, and useful data related to enrollment, retention, and course success. Data reports provided to the pilot testers were of limited use—for some programs virtually all entries were marked "N/A".
12. Provide a bank of assessment instruments related to student satisfaction (course, exit, follow-up, and general education) and the means to administer the instruments and process the resulting data. This may include assistance in locating and following up with former students.
13. Locate and process other information as needed and requested by programs and work with faculty to develop instruments to serve a variety of needs.
14. Respond to special needs of departments or programs related to assessment; for instance the nursing department needs to demonstrate validity and reliability of all instruments for accreditation.
15. Provide assistance for transfer programs to determine how they compare with other colleges.

In the long term, Research and Planning should continue to provide assistance and support for the assessment process and serve as a clearinghouse for assessment information and resources. With all departments and programs engaged in regular assessment activities, the demands on Research and Planning will be great. The department must be prepared and sufficiently staffed to address these increasing demands.

Recommendation 5: Close the feedback loop

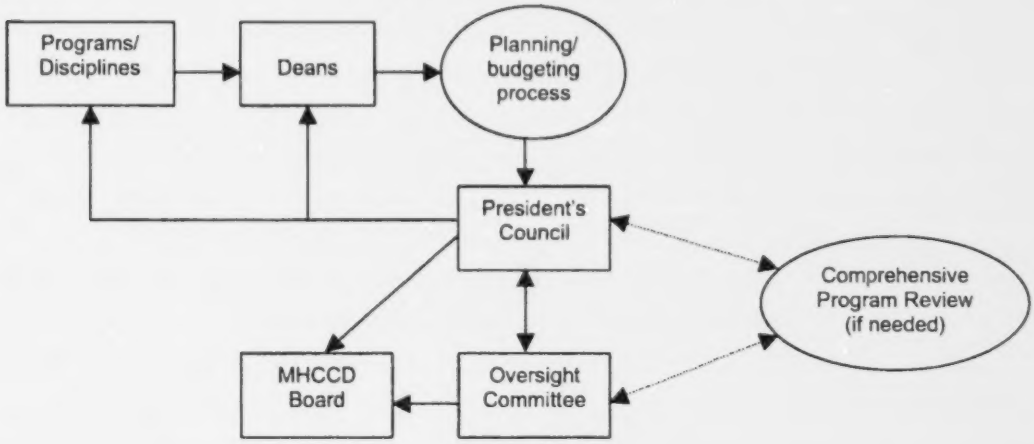
As conceived by the Assessment Taskforce, the function of the institutional assessment effort is to create an opportunity for feedback between the programs and departments and the college administration. The creation of the Assessment Oversight Committee is an important part of this

process as it serves its function to "provide ongoing monitoring of the educational assessment process, results, and actions." What remains unclear, however, is how the results and recommendations from the programs and departments will be transferred from the faculty and deans to the administration and how the administration will report back to the faculty. All recommendations resulting from this process that require resources or administrative approval need to follow a specific and consistent feedback loop as illustrated in Exhibit 3:

16. The programs and disciplines make recommendations as part of the institutional assessment process.
17. The deans submit overall division summaries to the President's Council via the vice presidents and to the Director of Research and Planning who will work with the faculty chair to schedule review by the Assessment Oversight Committee. The division summaries report findings and recommendations from the programs and disciplines and indicate which items need to be addressed in the next planning/budgeting cycle. Through the division summaries, the deans are responsible for bringing forward any resource requests identified in program and discipline assessments.
18. As part of its annual planning and budget development process, the President's Council responds in writing to the planning objectives and resource requests made by the deans as reported in the division summaries. The responses are sent to the Assessment Oversight Committee and copied to the vice presidents, the deans, and the programs and disciplines.
19. The Assessment Oversight Committee reviews the patterns of resource allocation and denial with special emphasis on the common indicators identified by each program or department. The committee submits an annual report to both the President's Council and the MHCC District Board of Education.
20. The Oversight Committee may initiate a comprehensive review of a program or discipline based on its findings from the annual review of assessment indicators or at the request of the President's Council. A comprehensive review may take one of many forms, such as additional data collection, paneling area employers, or DACUM. Results from a comprehensive review are forwarded to both the President's Council and the Oversight Committee, with the Oversight Committee submitting any recommendations to the

President's Council. The President's Council will issue its findings, recommendations and decisions in writing to the Assessment Oversight Committee and send copies to the vice presidents, the deans, and the relevant programs and disciplines. The Assessment Oversight Committee will include a summary of results and recommendations in its annual report to the MHCCD Board of Education.

Exhibit 3
The Assessment Reporting and Feedback Process



The Assessment Builder Software

Assessment Builder was the software used during the pilot process to store and report the assessment information. MHCC is beta testing this software as part of the pilot test. General reactions to the Assessment Builder software were mixed. A few pilot testers indicated that they found the software intuitive and logical with an easy to use, linear structure. More commonly, however, the pilot testers intensely disliked the software interface. (One tester called it "The worst software I've ever used.") These users found the interface unfriendly, nonintuitive, and visually perplexing. They also noted that the software has a steep learning curve.

Problems With the Assessment Builder Interface

Specific problems with the Assessment Builder interface and suggested changes for the final version of the software are outlined below.

Navigation

Some users found the navigation intuitive and were highly successful using the step-by-step instructions developed by one of the Assessment Taskforce members. Others, especially those who tend to think holistically rather than linearly, found the navigation exasperating. Several frustrated pilot testers commented that the software is not visually oriented and thus it is not possible to "feel your way around." Specific concerns and suggestions for improvement include the following:

21. The most common and emphatic frustration with the software interface was the need to reenter the department and criterion information each time the user moves to a new indicator. (Because the software repeatedly returned to a screen listing the department as *Dental Hygiene*, one tester termed the experience "software Groundhog Day" in reference to the movie in which a man is forced to relive the same day repeatedly.) The software should be modified so that the user enters the department code only once and subsequently is able to move freely between indicators, a change that several testers felt would improve the software tremendously.

22. Some testers found it difficult "to keep track of where you are in the software." These users noted that paths do not branch logically, and the software offers no linear method to reverse navigate. After entering findings for an indicator, for instance, the user is sent back to an earlier screen. Some users could not find where they had entered certain information in order to modify it later, especially when they returned to the software at a later session. (One tester stated that some numbers she had entered simply disappeared.) One frustrated tester remarked that the software requires the user to "submit a little information in a lot of different places." The navigation should be modified to require less movement between different screens or so that this movement is easier to follow.

23. The format of the opening interface—many pages each containing many buttons—is daunting, especially to visual users. Further, the software does not allow the use of menus or other familiar navigation tools. Also, the user should be able to determine easily which areas of the form are for what general purpose. For instance, the opening interface could

be divided into three distinct sections: data input, data reporting, and administrative use (entering indicators and departments).

Data Input

The testers expressed several concerns related to how the data is input:

24. A very small viewable space is provided to input potentially lengthy text responses. The testers were frequently frustrated because they could not see all of the text at once. The viewing space for text responses should be increased.
25. Users were not able to keep other applications open at the same time as Assessment Builder and therefore could not cut and paste information from existing documents into the software. Because much of the information to be entered will come from other sources, it is essential that this cut and paste process be available.
26. Users are required to enter their departments by discipline code, which most do not know, rather than by name. At a minimum, the list of departments should be presented alphabetically by department name rather than numerically by discipline code.
27. Some users felt the input was too isolated from the output. These users did not understand how the information they input would translate to a meaningful document. A *Print Preview* option available on the input screen may help.
28. Some form of online help is essential. The purpose of some buttons (*Special Information*) and the intended use of different fields (*Direct Measures* and *Indirect Measures* versus *Quantitative Results*) are very unclear.

Reporting

Several users commented that much of the power of the software will come from its ability to generate graphs, a feature unavailable in the beta version. In the current version, the software only creates a single report, which many users found difficult to read. (One user noted that the report "takes pages and pages to say three things.") Specific suggestions for improvement of the output follow:

29. The standard report should be reviewed and substantially improved for readability. For example, the indicator name should be highlighted, information about a single indicator should be prevented from spanning a page break, and items that are unimportant (such as the indicator code number) or left blank by the user should be suppressed. The report listing available indicators is similarly unreadable.

30. Include a brief report summarizing the essential information for all indicators on 1 or 2 pages. For instance, list only the name of the indicator, the achievement level, and the "recommendations".

31. Improve the report listing which indicators are available to respond to. Like the report of findings, this report is virtually unreadable. It is further confused because it includes a list of all indicators.

Technical Problems With the Software

Additionally, the pilot testers commonly encountered three technical problems:

32. The software crashed or froze up regularly.
33. The software disappeared (or the users perceived that it disappeared) from individual workstations. At least two testers were unable to complete the work because they could not locate the software during the time they had set aside to work on the assessment process.
34. The users could not print the reports and thus view their output from their work areas but had to request reports from Research and Planning. (One user wondered, "I enter the data then Dan sends it to me as a Word file—why not just type it as a Word file in the first place?")

Additional problems with the technical operation of the software included the following:

35. The software is not dual-platform and some departments have only Macintosh computers.
36. The username for entering the Assessment Builder software is the user's first initial followed by last name. This order is opposite of the last name followed by first initial format used for e-mail and server access at MHCC. Remembering passwords, which can also differ from system passwords, was also an obstacle.

Despite technical problems and dissatisfaction with the interface, many users appreciated the opportunity to record assessment-related data in a manner that is systematic, uniform, and consistent. Some pilot testers commented that the function of the software—storing and organizing assessment data and noting departmental expectations and problems—is effective and useful. A few users, however, insisted that the software is "not worth what you get out of it", and would prefer simply to enter the information into Word or Excel.

General Recommendations

For any software to be used effectively by large number of faculty and staff members collegewide, the interface must be intuitive and user friendly. As one tester noted, the software "is just a way to organize the information—it should not be an obstacle." Consequently, one of the following three courses of action is recommended:

37. Use the software only for data input by a few trained users. Departmental faculty and staff could submit information, perhaps using a Word template, to the Research and Planning staff who would then coordinate the data entry into Assessment Builder. Alternately, one Unit Coordinator in each division could be individually trained in the use and troubleshooting of the software and could provide one-on-one assistance to the other Unit Coordinators.
38. Engage a consultant to develop a custom database for the specific assessment needs of MHCC rather than using the packaged Assessment Builder software.
39. Request that the software publisher, for whom MHCC is beta testing the product, overhaul the interface as outlined. If the publisher is unable to make the changes in a timely manner, it may be necessary to revert to the first recommendation (using the software only for data input) in the interim. If this course of action is chosen, the primary technical problems outlined above must also be addressed before using the software collegewide.

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